

REMARKS

The patent application entered the National Phase in the United States on December 26, 2001 with original Claims 1-4. A Preliminary Amendment was filed December 26, 2001, that attempted to replace original Claims 2-4 with new claims, to renumber original Claims 2-4 as Claims 10, 12, and 18, respectively, and to add new claims. An Office Action dated March 14, 2003, restricted claims 1-18 and required election of one of Group I (Claims 1-9 and 18), Group II (Claims 10-11), or Group III (Claims 12-17). A Response to the Restriction Requirement filed April 14, 2003, elected Group I (Claims 1-9 and 18).

However, an Office Communication mailed May 7, 2003, stated that the Preliminary Amendment filed on December 26, 2001 was improper. The Office Communication stated that, because the Preliminary Amendment was improper, only original Claims 1-4 are pending in the application. The Office Communication also stated that, because the Restriction Requirement was based on an assumption that Claims 1-18 were properly filed, the Response to the Restriction Requirement is improper. The Office Communication further stated that, to expedite prosecution, it would be acceptable in responding to the Office Communication to cancel any appropriate nonelected claims and to have any elected claims properly renumbered. The Examiner is thanked for notifying Applicants regarding any inadvertent improper numbering of Claims.

By way of this Response, Applicants hereby accept the Examiner's invitation to cancel any appropriate nonelected claims and to have any elected claims properly renumbered. To that end, Applicants hereby elect claims in Group I (original Claims 1 and 4), cancel claims in Group II (original Claim 2) and Group III (Original Claim 3), and add new claims 5-12 that depend from Claim 1.



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The Applicants respectfully request entry of the Amendment. The Examiner is invited to extend any questions to the Applicants' attorney at the phone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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MAIL CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that this communication is being deposited with the United States Postal Service via First Class Mail under 37 C.F.R. § 1.08 on the date indicated below addressed to: MAIL STOP NON-FEE AMENDMENT, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450.

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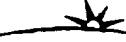
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